

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

DATE: September 6, 2007

CALLED TO ORDER: 6:16 p.m.

ADJOURNED: 6:46 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Attending Members

Vernon Brown, Chair
Bob Cockrum
Susie Day
Ron Gibson
Monroe Gray, Jr.
Bob Lutz
Dane Mahern
William Oliver

Absent Members

BUDGET HEARING

Review and Analysis

PROPOSAL NO. 342, 2007 - adopts the annual budget for Indianapolis and Marion County for 2008 (Parks and Recreation portion only)
"Do Pass as Amended"

Vote: 5-3

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE

The Parks and Recreation Committee of the City-County Council met on Thursday, September 6, 2007. Chair Vernon Brown called the meeting to order at 6:16 p.m. with the following members present: Bob Cockrum, Susie Day, Ron Gibson, Monroe Gray, Jr., Bob Lutz, Dane Mahern, and William "Duke" Oliver. Bart Brown, Chief Financial Officer, represented Council Staff.

PROPOSAL NO. 342, 2007 - adopts the annual budget for Indianapolis and Marion County for 2008 (Parks and Recreation portion only)

Robert Clifford, City Controller, Office of Finance and Management (OFM), stated that parts of the introduced proposal for the Parks and Recreation appropriations are on pages 13 and 14, and there are no changes to that. He said that there is a suggested change to the number of Full Time Equivalents (FTEs). Bart Brown, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), stated that based upon the budget and the number of FTE's that were agreed upon between the Controller and the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), they would like to make the following changes. He said that DPR has reduced the number of FTE's from 266 to 259 for a new total of 439.21. Mr. Brown stated that this is a technical amendment to match the budget with the number of employees. Jeff Seidenstein, Budget Manager, OFM, stated that these are the same FTE's approved for 2007.

Councillor Gibson moved, seconded by Councillor Cockrum, to "amend" Proposal No. 342, 2007 to reflect the FTE changes. The motion carried by a vote of 8-0.

Councillor Cockrum stated that he would like to offer an amendment to modify the budget for DPR. Chair Brown asked if Councillor Cockrum was offering an amendment to the budget and if all of the committee members have the amendment. Councillor Cockrum answered in the affirmative that it was an amendment to the budget. He said having copies for all members is not required in committee.

Councillor Cockrum stated that what is being proposed is a reduction of \$1 million dollars in the budget of DPR. He said that in looking at the summary page at the front of the budget book, the total City-County budget is up 27½% since 2004. He said that Public Safety is up 37½%, Debt Service is up 59%, Community Affairs is up 39.4%, however, Parks and Recreation is up .6%. Chair Brown asked how much is that dollar wise to DPR's budget. Councillor Cockrum stated that he did not figure that out.

Councillor Cockrum stated that ever since he has been a Councillor, he has had a deep interest in Parks. He said that part of the reason is because his constituents talked to him in the beginning, and they wanted more park space. He said that during his time on the Council, there have been 236 acres added to his district. He said that 188 of those acres were added to Southwest Way Park, which is now the second largest park next to Eagle Creek Park.

Councillor Cockrum stated that Mr. Wynns, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and his staff do an excellent job. He said that with the recent events regarding property tax bills, it is loud and clear that the public wants this Council to reduce the cost of local government. He said that he has been visiting his constituents and is alarmed to hear some of the stories that involve citizens losing their homes, not being able to afford food to feed their families, and now paying more for taxes than their basic mortgage.

Councillor Cockrum gave the amounts of the proposed reduction. The amounts are:

- Reduce the Arts funding of \$750,000
- Reduce Character 01 of \$250,000

Councillor Cockrum stated that with regards to the Arts funding, about 12 years ago their budget was \$500,000 and later increased to \$750,000 under former Mayor Goldsmith. He said that the Arts is up over 200% from eight years ago. Councillor Cockrum stated that Mayor Peterson should be congratulated for his efforts to improve the Arts in this city, and they do an outstanding job. He stated that he would encourage the arts community to join in lobbying the State Legislature to have as much as the local government off of property tax and over to the sales tax. He said that the reduction of \$750,000 puts the arts funding back to \$793,500, which is about 5.8% higher than it was in 1999.

Councillor Cockrum stated that in Character 01, there was a savings shown of \$1 million. He said of that \$1 million, \$576,662 was in Character 01 mainly because of vacancies in staff. Councillor Cockrum stated that a quarter of a million dollars is less than half of that total and would amount to 1.5% reduction, and the staff can find ways to delay hiring. He said they should not be micromanaged but give them a goal and let them work it out.

Councillor Cockrum moved, second by Councillor Lutz, to "amend" Proposal No. 342, 2007, to reduce Arts funding by \$750,000 and Character 01 by \$250,000 in Parks and Recreation budget.

Mr. Brown stated that he has not seen the proposed amendment and would like the Chair to table this proposal so that he can take a look at the impact it will have on Parks in Character 01. Chair Brown asked Mr. Wynns if he and Councillor Cockrum had a chance to discuss the amendment. Joseph Wynns, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), stated that Councillor Cockrum called him and said that he was going to make a recommendation.

Councillor Mahern stated that this is alarming to him. He said that the Arts is a program that also gives back to the community on more than one level. He said that the amount of money that the city puts in compared to what the Arts bring in, is such a small percentage. He said that the different programs are spread out to so many areas that do

take kids off the streets and gives them development and insight. He said the Arts means more to the community than we give them credit for. He said this is done as a last minute effort to cut funding to something that we have already put ourselves on the line to decide where those funds go and how it is allotted. He asked who and what areas will get to keep those funds and what areas get cut.

Councillor Gibson stated that most of us heard loud and clear from our citizens in terms of the property tax crisis. He said this is a broader issue than local government. It is an issue that involves much needed reform and changes at the state level. He said that Mayor Peterson and his staff have given a budget for 2008 that reduces the reliance on property taxes by about \$50 million dollars and that is a significant cut for 2008. He said that shows that the Council is concerned about how those funds are being administered. Councillor Gibson acknowledged Mr. Wynns for stepping up and cutting \$1 million dollars from 2007. He said that with regards to the Arts, they have produced almost one-half of a billion dollars in economic revenue in Marion County. He said that the Arts is very important to the overall viability of this city and they have more than repaid the amount of money that is invested in them.

Councillor Lutz stated that he does not want to cut any part of the budget, but that this is one of those things that needs to be dealt with. He said that the City is in economic crisis and at this particular time those cuts need to be made. He said that he has listened to his constituents and they feel that the Arts is one of those areas that need to be cut. He said that he will be supporting Councillor Cockrum's motion.

Mr. Brown stated that the Governor ordered a re-assessment and allowed taxpayers to pay their 2006 property tax bills. He said that no one is paying more than they did in 2006, and Councillor Gray said at the last Council meeting, the Council is looking at ways it can help with tax bills next year. He said that cutting the levy is something that can be thought about, but it is also the bills for 2007. Anything done with cutting the levy is going to the 2008 bills. He said that the 2007 bills are the problem. He stated that the reason he brought up tabling the proposal, is that he did not know about Councillor Cockrum's amendment.

Chair Brown thanked Councillor Cockrum for trying to think outside the box. He said that all Councillors want to see some significant long-term reductions in property taxes. He said that we have been good fiscal stewards of the funds that are received from property taxes and have made significant reductions over the last four years. Chair Brown stated that this amendment was not discussed in depth with Mr. Wynns, Wayne Simpson, DPR's CFO, and the Council's CFO, and we do not know what impact .6% is going to have on the levy. He said that he applauds Councillor Cockrum for thinking of ways to help with the budget.

Councillor Cockrum stated that this amendment was just done after speaking with the Republican Caucus, and he did not have time to talk with anyone before the meeting.

Chair Brown stated that DPR has been a good fiscal steward with the taxpayer's money. He said that DPR has made some reductions this year and their budget has increased \$215,000 since 2004.

Councillor Lutz stated that the amendment is a small portion of the budget but a million dollars is a million dollars and that is an amount that is not being spent by the taxpayers.

Mr. Wynns stated that for every action there is a reaction. He said that if you take \$1 million dollars it could cost you \$5 million and one of the things that has to be cautioned when cutting personnel is that the grants coordinator is in that group that Councillor Cockrum wants to cut. He said that the grants coordinator brings in almost \$500,000 a year in grants that the taxpayers are not paying for. Mr. Wynns stated that if the 16 positions in DPR at \$250,000 were cut, DPR will have to start closing community centers and pools in different districts, and there would be major reaction.

Councillor Lutz stated that he was not suggesting who should be cut, that is Mr. Wynn's decision as Director of DPR.

Councillor Mahern stated that DPR's increase of \$215,000 since 2004 is less than what the gas increase was. He said that it is hard for him to understand how someone wants to keep coming after DPR's budget the way it has been done.

Public Testimony

Robert Yahara stated that when looking at the tax rate chart, Councillor Cockrum's district has a very high tax rate and within the old City limits, Decatur Township is the third highest. He said that he understands the pain for those constituents in that district. He said that Councillor Lutz's district is the second highest and he appreciates Councillor Lutz's empathy and concern for his constituents as they look to make cuts and he believes that in the future, the city and county will be looking very carefully at how the tax rates are affected by the tax districts. Mr. Yahara thanked Mr. Wynns and his staff for all that they do and applauds all Councillors for their service and dedication.

The motion to "amend" failed by a vote of 3-5, with Councillors Brown, Gray, Gibson, Oliver and Mahern casting the negative votes.

Councillor Oliver moved, seconded by Councillor Gibson, to send Proposal No. 342, 2007 to the full Council with a "Do Pass as Amended" recommendation. This motion carried by a vote of 5-3.

Parks and Recreation Committee

May 3, 2007

Page 5

With no further business pending, and upon motion duly made, the Parks and Recreation Committee of the City-County Council was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Vernon Brown, Chair
Parks and Recreation Committee

VB/law